

# Lincoln County Montana



512 CALIFORNIA AVENUE • LIBBY, MONTANA 59923 • (406) 293-7781 Ext 208 • (406) 293-8577 Fax • E-mail: lccomms@libby.org

RITA R. WINDOM, Commissioner DISTRICT NO. 1, LIBBY

June 14, 2006

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Max Dodson  
USEPA Region 8, EPR-SR  
999 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 300  
Denver, CO 80202-2466

**ADMINISTRATIVE  
RECORD**

RE: Libby Superfund Site

Dear Mr. Dodson:

I appreciate the Town Meeting on June 13, 2006, in Libby. Some good questions were addressed but there really wasn't enough time to adequately present questions from my perspective.

I have drafted four questions that I would like very specific answers to in writing. The answers are vital to the community of Libby.

The ambient air review must be made available to this community as quickly as possible. It is totally unacceptable to delay disseminating the results to a community that has patiently waited for years. I am requesting that the document be made available by July 11 in the Lincoln County Commissioners' Office on that date.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rita Windom".  
Rita Windom

confusion, and inconsistencies that it took us 3-4 years to recover from 2000-2003?

3. All of this revolves around safety - specifically the safety of being in Libby in general. If EPA or parts of EPA don't think it's safe to be in Libby - walking down the street, living at a house or property EPA cleaned up - then you should come out and say it. Please don't be ambivalent. After seven years of cleanup and investigation, you OWE us that much. If people in EPA don't think it's safe just to be here or to be in a cleaned up property, and feel like they need to change the web page and completion letters, I'd like to know why and see some data to support it. If you really do feel that way, then your approach seems completely inconsistent and out of touch with reality. If you can't say it's safe to walk the streets of Libby, then why do you let your cleanup workers live here? If you can't say that the cleanups are reasonably protective, then why are you spending \$20 million a year? If it's unsafe to be exposed to even those low levels in ambient air or in a cleaned up house, then why don't you post warnings or evacuate the town? Why do you let kids play on the ball fields that you cleaned up? Why aren't you concerned about residents in NYC or other metropolitan areas that have background levels as high or higher than Libby? Why aren't you cleaning up houses across the country with VAI? What about the billions of pounds of vermiculite that left Libby - aren't you worried about that?

4. I understand now that your scientists want to collect more data before you do a risk assessment, RI/FS, and ROD. We all want more data and certainty, but why now? And why investigate silly things like outdoor dust on hard surfaces and cars? I understand you have 80,000+ samples from Libby - can't you say something about risk based on those? If you can't,

1. Why has it taken so long to publish a draft ambient air report for the public to review? Paul Peronard and Chris Weis both told us years ago that ambient air wasn't the concern in Libby, and Jim has echoed that for several years. Specifically, he has said that while the amount of asbestos in ambient air isn't zero, the risks are about the lowest we have in Libby (risks from disturbing vermiculite or contaminated dust are much more of a concern). He's told us for about two years that a report on the topic was forthcoming, but now I understand that you are working on it some more. Why? Are we ever going to get something to review? What's more important, Libby residents getting a chance to read something with some teeth or EPA trying to get it perfect before we can see anything? Do you have ANY data to suggest that ambient air is a risk to residents or visitors, especially in the short-term? If you don't, then you should say that. If you do, we'd like to know about it.

2. On a related topic, I understand that EPA is currently reworking the EPA Libby web page AND the cleanup completion letter. BOTH of those are items that Jim and Wendy worked closely with many local interests on - now they are being reworked unilaterally and we can't see the changes. That seems like a step backward. Why have you taken this approach? Who wants the web site and cleanup completion letter changed? What wrong are they trying to correct? Have you considered the effects on tourism, mortgages, and other local concerns? I feel like we've finally gotten to a good balance here in Libby of warnings without panic; education without hype; knowledge without needless publicity. I really worry we are stepping right back to 1999-2000. Are you prepared to deal with the panic,

and you can't make common sense decision, then you need new scientists. The same scientists like Aubrey have been working on Libby for years and they decide NOW they need even more data? When is this going to end? Jim said he had enough data and information to make a good cleanup decision now - and when he explained it, it made good sense - there are only a few things you can really do on cleanup in Libby. Do you disagree? If so, why? Are we doing science for the sake of science or politics or are we trying to make the best decision for Libby? Has there ever been a more thorough large scale residential/commercial cleanup done in the U.S.? If so, where? If not, then why are we changing the completion letter?